

F-32
P2898
copy 3

HOMILETICS

CLASSIFICATION OF DIVISIONS

✓
WILLIAM M. PAXTON

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

1904



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
Princeton Theological Seminary Library

CLASSIFICATION OF DIVISIONS

As we have classified sermons, not according to any theoretical arrangement, but according to the kinds of sermons in actual use among approved sermonizers, we propose to classify divisions in the same way. As there are many kinds of sermons, so there are many kinds of divisions. Any one, who will take the trouble to examine the division in actual use, will find that the methods of divisions are very numerous, and might be arranged into very many classes, with distinct points of difference between them. More careful study, however, will show you that they may all be reduced to the two well-known classes, Topical and Textual Divisions, with a number of subdivisions under each general class.

A. Topical Divisions

To promote clearness let me ask you to observe that there are three words in common use in rhetoric, which have the same meaning and are used interchangeably. These words are, Subject, Theme, and Topic. Subject is from the Latin word *subjectum*, meaning placed under, and hence is used to designate the matter or point of thought that is placed under consideration. Theme is from the Greek word *θεμα*—meaning that which is laid down or proposed for discussion. Topic is derived from the Greek word *τοπος*—a place, or *τοπιχος*—pertaining to a place or locality, a common place of thought, or the thought

which we locate as the point of consideration or discussion. Hence the three words are identical in their meaning. Some writers prefer the word subject and speak of subject sermons. Others use the word theme and treat of theme sermons. We prefer the word Topic, and hence use the designation Topical Sermons and Topical Divisions.

A Topical Division is the division of a Topic. A text is chosen and treated in the introduction so as to expound its meaning and to show that the topic is the precise point of thought contained in the text, or that your Topic is fairly warranted from the meaning of the text and expresses its spirit. The text is then dropped and the Topic divided, and the several points of this topical division are pursued in the discourse.

This makes a strong and clear distinction between the Topical and Textual Division. In the one case the Topic is divided, in the other the text is divided. The textual division is the more scriptural. This makes the text the subject of the sermon, whilst the topic is an abstract subject evolved from the text. Dr. Hoppin says, "We grant that topical preaching has done a great work, and will continue to do so, but its exclusive use has engendered many errors in preaching, and has sometimes led the preacher astray from the true object of preaching. It has above all spoiled variety and freedom." Again he says, "A Topical Sermon requires an artistic handling like an oration. It is something, after all, outside of the text, though it should be in strict accordance with it. It requires brief texts containing complete themes, and themes capable of didactic development; but this style of sermonizing is apt to lead to the neglect of the word of God. The sermon, in fact, hangs on the proposition or topic, instead of the text."

Let us endeavor to get a clear idea of the special design and method of a Topical Division.

A Topical Sermon presents one single subject, and the division is the analysis of this single theme. Dr.

Shedd says (Homiletics, p. 145), "A Topical Sermon is occupied with a single definite theme that can be completely enunciated in a brief statement—it approaches nearest to the unity, symmetry and convergence of the oration proper. It should contain one leading thought rather than several."

With this general idea of a Topical Sermon let us notice the different forms which it may assume. We indicate three classes of Topical Divisions:

I. SIMPLE TOPICAL DIVISIONS.

We have often a definite and complete subject expressed by a single word, as for example, the commonplace topics of theology, "Sin," "Atonement," "Regeneration," "Repentance," "Faith;" or the fruits of Christian duty, "Obedience," "Prayer," "Benevolence;" or characteristics of Christian experience, "Love," "Joy," "Peace," "Meekness," "Temperance." These are a few examples of a large multitude of complete subjects or topics expressed by a single word. When you wish to treat such a topic, you choose your text, expound it, draw your topic from your text, then, dropping the text, you divide your topic. The usual and best method of division is by an analysis of its parts. Suppose your topic is "Regeneration," you analyze the topic, and get as the results,

1. The Nature of Regeneration;
2. The Necessity of Regeneration;
3. The Author of Regeneration;
4. The Means of Regeneration;
5. The Evidences of Regeneration.

A simple topic presents a complete subject to your mind, and a proper analysis exhibits all its parts. You can treat in the sermon any or all the points included in the analysis, and you can express them in such language as you please. I have adopted in the foregoing analysis the commonplace terms of theology for the sake of clear-

ness, but each preacher should be encouraged to select his own forms of expression.

It may make this method of division plainer to give another illustration. Dr. Van Osterzee takes as his topic "The Resurrection," and shows,

1. Its essential Character;
2. Its Certainty;
3. Its Glory.

If your subject is "Unbelief," your analysis might be,

1. Its Nature;
2. Its Causes;
3. Its Sinfulness;
4. Its Consequences.

These or any other points included in the subject may be introduced into the division.

This Topical Method of Division is adapted specially to larger and comprehensive subjects. There are times when a pastor wishes to present one of the great doctrines in its completeness and in the connection of all its parts. For such purposes this division is better than any other. This was the character of Whitfield's great sermon on "Regeneration" which he preached so often and with such great results. If a single point of a subject is to be treated it is better to adopt the propositional method, as we shall afterwards show.

The advantages of this method of division are—

First. It disciplines the preacher's mind to comprehensive views of truth.

Second. It gives the people systematic views of its truth in its larger and wider connections. The danger of this method is that the sermon may be dry. It may be a mere skeleton of dry bones with but little skin or flesh to cover them. If so, the preacher does not understand his business. He has attempted to put in all the thoughts that belong to the subject instead of selecting the salient points and presenting them in a rapid and striking view. In such a sermon much of the skill consists in knowing what not to say.

II. TOPICO-PROPOSITIONAL DIVISIONS.

The second class of Topical Sermons consists of those in which the topic is announced in the form of a Proposition. As in the former class we divided the simple topic, in this class we divide the Proposition. Hence we may call it a Topico-Propositional Division. Let us then notice what a Proposition is in its rhetorical meaning and in what its division consists.

A Proposition, from *pro* and *pono*, is something placed before us for consideration. In Logic and Rhetoric it has its special and distinctive meaning, but in Homiletics the Proposition is that part of the sermon which announces or sets before the minds of the people in distinct and formal statement the truth which is proposed for consideration or discussion. "The Proposition," says Dr. Shedd, "should be stated in the most concise manner possible. It should be the condensation and epitome of the whole discourse, and should therefore be characterized by the utmost density of meaning. A Propositional sentence is very different from any ordinary sentence. Its phraseology ought to be as near perfection as possible. The Proposition of a sermon ought to be eminent for the nice exactness of its expression and the hard finish of its diction." (Dr. Shedd, Homiletics p. 184.)

Dr. Fisk, in his Manual of Preaching, says: "In the Proposition of a sermon there should be no words that need any explanation; no figurative, technical or theological terms which are not fully understood by the people. The statement of the proposition should be so simple both in word and structure that the thought shall shine through it as clearly as the sun through the atmosphere."

The rhetoricians distinguish two kinds of propositions, logical and rhetorical propositions. Both these forms of propositions occur frequently in sermonizing, and it is important that we understand their use. The subject or topic which we propose to treat may be thrown into

either of these forms, and it is necessary for us to understand which form will be most advantageous.

A logical proposition is an affirmation or denial of something, or in other words, it is a judgment either affirmative or negative expressed in words. Hence a logical proposition demands proof. "God is Love" is a logical proposition. It has a subject spoken of, "God," and a predicate, that which is said, "is Love," "God is Love." Hence the logical proposition binds us down to prove either the affirmation or negation.

As distinguished from this, a rhetorical proposition is more general. It is a single statement of any fact or truth. It is any form of expression by which the subject of a discourse is announced. Thus "the Immutability of God" is a rhetorical proposition, or "the Unsearchableness of God's Judgments," to put this distinction in its simplest form. If we announce as our topic "the Justice of God," we have a rhetorical proposition, but if we put it in an affirmative form, "God is Just," we have a logical proposition. This seems very simple, and you may think that it makes little difference which form you adopt, but in actual work the difference in the division and structure of the sermon will be very great. Dr. Phelps, (*Theory of Preaching*, p. 330,) shows this by a very interesting statement. He says, "It is not a matter of indifference whether we select the rhetorical or logical proposition. The endowment of the Hollis Professorship in Harvard requires the incumbent to preach to the students on 'the Divinity of Christ.' The report was once current that the last occupant of the chair preached against the divinity of Christ. If he did so the design of the founder was frustrated by so small a matter as the difference between a rhetorical and a logical proposition."

Having seen what a proposition is, and the difference between these two forms of propositions in frequent use in sermonizing, we are now prepared to ask, how are

they to be divided, and what is the advantage of each?
We notice,

A. THE LOGICAL PROPOSITION.

Suppose your topic is drawn from your text in the form of a logical proposition, how is it to be treated as regards division? We answer in several ways. We indicate two methods.

1. BY PROOF.

The divisions should be made with special reference to the proof of the affirmation or denial made in the proposition. Frequently the division consists of the various proofs by which the proposition is supported. The proposition expresses a judgment or makes an affirmation, and the one thing it calls us to do is to prove it.

Theremin, the court preacher in Berlin, has a sermon on "The Resurrection of Christ." His topic he expresses in the form of a logical proposition thus: "The Resurrection of Christ is a powerful incentive to Repentance." His divisions are the several proofs of this assertion.

It is so,

1. Because it proves that there is an invisible world.
2. Because it shows that after death we pass into that invisible world.
3. Because it demonstrates that our destiny in that world depends upon the relation in which one stands to Christ.

Another fine example in which the divisions are the several proofs of the proposition is in a sermon by Bishop South. Text, Numbers 32:23, "Be sure your sin will find you out." The topic is in the form of a logical proposition, "Concealment of Sin is no security to the Sinner."

1. Because the sinner's very confidence of secrecy is the cause of his detection.
2. Because there is sometimes a providential concurrence of unexpected events which leads to his detection.

3. Because one sin is sometimes the means of discovering another.

4. Because the sinner may unwittingly discover himself through frenzy or distraction.

5. Because the sinner may be forced to discover himself by his own conscience.

6. Because the sinner may be smitten by some notable judgment that discloses his guilt, and

7. Because his guilt will follow him into another world if he should chance to escape in this.

This may suffice to show the division of a logical proposition by proofs.

The several proofs of the point affirmed or the disproofs of the point denied, are the divisions of the sermon. This is a favorite method in the pulpit in all closely argued sermons in which a single point is taken, and the whole work of the sermon is to demonstrate a truth or refute an error.

2. BY EXPLANATION OR ILLUSTRATION.

A second method of dividing a logical proposition is by explanation or illustration. The division consists in showing the different respects in which the point affirmed is true. For example, we select from Dr. Kidder the proposition drawn from Deuteronomy 4:35, "God is infinitely and gloriously Perfect." This is a logical proposition. It does not need proof, for no one doubts it, but it contains an important and edifying truth, which may be brought out by explaining in what respects God is infinitely and gloriously perfect; thus, He is so,

1. As to His eternity
2. As to His omnipresence.
3. As to His omnipotence.
4. As to His wisdom.

Saurin, the great Reformed French preacher, has a sermon on the logical proposition "Revealed Religion is infinitely superior to Natural Religion." His division explains the several respects in which this superiority

consists. It is superior in the knowledge which it gives us,

1. Of the nature and attributes of God.
2. Of the nature and obligations of man.
3. Of the means of appeasing the remorse of conscience.
4. Of the future state.

Another simple and striking division of a logical proposition by way of illustration is from Psalm 18:30, "The word of the Lord is tried."

1. By time (history).
2. By philosophy.
3. By science.
4. By experience (its adaptation to the wants of men).

This may suffice to show the different ways in which the Logical Proposition may be treated as to division.

The advantages of the Logical Proposition are:—

First. That it gives the most perfect unity to the discourse.

Second. It stimulates the mind of the preacher by thinking to a single point and urges him to industry in gathering the proofs to sustain the affirmation to which he has committed himself.

B. THE RHETORICAL PROPOSITION.

The second form of proposition is the Rhetorical Proposition. Let me show its use and the method of its division.

As a general rule a topic may be announced either as logical or as a rhetorical proposition. For example, the topic is the same, whether I adopt the logical form and say, "All Men are Sinners," or the rhetorical form, "The universal Sinfulness of Man"; but there is a great practical difference between the two forms. The first, the logical proposition, binds me to an argument about a single point. But an argument is not always needed. Some subjects are spoiled by argument. "There are truths," says Dr. Fisk, "whose beauty and sweetness

are crushed out of them by forcing them into logical form." Besides, there may be a large field of truth in your topic which lies outside of proof, which it will be edifying to treat. Hence there are many subjects to which the form of a rhetorical proposition is better adapted. It opens a larger field. It does not necessitate proof. It presents a topic in such a general statement that we can treat it in any or all the aspects of a general theme. Thus, if the proposition is "the Holiness of God," it opens to us the whole compass of that wide field. Dr. Fisk says, "it is desirable with some subjects that the preacher have a wider range of materials than he can have when shut within the walls of a logical form of statement." It must be observed, however, that while a rhetorical proposition presents a general subject in all its range of thought, it does not exclude proofs, and sometimes the more general points may be treated and followed by the proofs of the special point implied in the text.

To familiarize your mind with the forms of rhetorical propositions and to show their use in the statement of every kind of subject, even the most practical, I may mention a few rhetorical propositions. "The Preciousness of Christ," "The Sin of Unbelief," "The Sanctification of the Sabbath," "The Relation of Repentance as a Duty to Repentance as a Gift." "The Power of Conscience." Sometimes the proposition may be stated in an interrogative form, "Is the Duty of Repentance universal?"

With this understanding of the rhetorical proposition we may now inquire how it should be divided. We answer—as it presents a subject in all its aspects, you are at liberty to divide it very much as you please, only so that your lines of thought lie within the compass of your theme. Your division may take shape from the particular purpose for which you have chosen your topic, or from the shape in which the subject lies in your own mind, or from your own taste or genius. These propositions have been treated in such a large variety of ways that

it will be impossible to indicate many of the forms which such divisions assume, but we may mention one or two.

1. BY WAY OF INSTRUCTION.

Suppose your proposition is, "The Purpose of the Incarnation," your division should indicate, for the instruction of the people, the several points included in the purpose of the Incarnation. Its purpose was,

1. To make God visible.
2. To show us God as a Person.
3. To exhibit God as an object of love.
4. To make an atonement for sin.
5. To set us an example of human life.

2. THE DIVISION MAY BE BY WAY OF INVESTIGATION.

Thus, Jeremy Taylor takes the text John 9:31, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners, but, if any man be a worshipper of God and doth his will, him he heareth."

From this text he draws the rhetorical proposition, "The Conditions of prevailing Prayer." With a view to investigation under the teaching of the text he says, We shall consider,

1. What are those conditions which are required in every person who prays, the want of which makes the prayer to be sin?
2. What are the conditions of a good man's prayers, the absence of which causes his prayers to return empty?
3. What degrees and circumstances of piety are required to make a man fit to be an intercessor for others?
4. What are the indications by which we may judge whether God hath heard our prayers or not?

3. THE DIVISION OF A RHETORICAL PROPOSITION MAY BE EXPLANATORY.

Richard Winter Hamilton takes the text Galatians 1:8, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." From this he takes the proposition, "Christianity Inviolable."

His division is to explain the different respects in which Christianity is inviolable. It is so, because,

1. Its divine origin cannot be controverted.
2. Its efficacy cannot be denied.
3. Its authority cannot be superseded.
4. Its existence cannot be endangered.

This may suffice to show some of the many ways in which a rhetorical proposition may be divided. These examples are enough to stimulate thought and ingenuity in the construction of such divisions for yourselves, while a more elaborate enumeration of methods might produce confusion.

III. COMPOUND PROPOSITIONAL DIVISIONS.

The third class of topical divisions consists of Compound Propositional Divisions. In the former instances a single proposition was drawn from the text, but in this class of divisions two or more or a series of propositions are drawn from the text. In this case the propositions themselves are your divisions. A very large number of sermons are divided in this way. It was a favorite method with all the great Puritan divines, and it is largely used by many of the best thinkers in the present day.

The special caution to be observed in this kind of division is to maintain the unity of the discourse by raising only such propositions as are connected vitally with the text. Propositions are sometimes hung so loosely around the text that, although they are true and scriptural, they have so little affinity with the text as to lose their impressiveness.

A fine example of this kind of division we find in a sermon by Dr. Alexander McLaren, of Manchester, England, who is now one of the great preachers of the world.

His text is,

Matthew 17: 19, 20.

“Then came the disciples of Jesus apart, and said, Why could we not cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief.”

From this text in its connection he starts four propositions:

1. The Gospel is a power to cast out evil spirits.
2. The condition of exercising this power is faith.
3. Our faith is ever threatened by a subtle unbelief.
4. Our faith can be maintained only by a constant devotion and rigid self-denial.

Another example we take from the sermons of Bishop Simpson, of the Methodist Church, one of the greatest preachers of the present generation. His text is,

Isaiah 60: 18,

“But thou shall call her walls salvation and her gates praise.”

From this text he draws two propositions:

1. The Christian Church is a place of safety.
2. The Christian Church is a place of joy.

You observe that here are two distinct propositions in reference to the Church, making it a Compound Propositional Division. You will notice also that each proposition is a logical proposition. Hence he treats each as a logical proposition, and proceeds thus:

First Proposition. The Church is a place of safety.

1. Because it is far from the evil practices which distract the harmony of society and lead youth astray.
2. Because the trains of thought that are brought before the mind are such as to banish evil suggestions.
3. Because the moral standards of the Church are so much higher than the standards of the world.
4. Because it brings vividly to the view of men the retribution of the future.

Second Proposition. The Church is a place of joy.

1. Because the intelligence communicated to the Church is ever of a joyful character.
2. The experience of the Church is a joyful experience.

This finishes our view of the several forms of Topical Divisions.

B. Textual Divisions

The second general class of Divisions is composed of what are called Textual Divisions. In the former class we divide the Topic, in this class we divide the Text.

Of these we distinguish three kinds: Expositions, Lectures, and Textual Sermons.

I. EXPOSITIONS.

In a former lecture we have discussed so fully the whole subject of expository preaching as to render it unnecessary to return to that subject again. By referring to the previous lecture you will find that we have indicated the different forms into which an expository sermon may be cast. Regarding this as sufficient, we pass on to

II. LECTURES.

Lectures, accurately speaking, are expositions—the highest, best, and most perfect form of exposition. We treat them under a special head simply to give them definiteness and emphasis. A lecture has for its subject several verses of scripture, or a paragraph, or a more lengthy passage which is complete as to its sense or meaning. The lecture treats this lengthy passage much in the same way as a textual sermon treats a single text. It is systematic in its construction, orderly in its division and furnishes a fine field for the exercise of analytical skill. The preacher masters the whole thought of the passage, holds it in mind and arranges it into a division which will at once secure unity of subject and subserve the purposes of instruction, illustration and impression.

From this you will perceive that a lecture is a difficult piece of intellectual architecture. It requires breadth and grasp of mind to hold so large a compass of thought, and a high degree of structural ingenuity to frame it into an orderly division. Lecturing is not an easier method of preaching, it is not several little sermons upon

a number of consecutive texts, nor is it a simple paraphrase or explanation. It is a large range of thought, mastered and reduced to unity and then distributed and arranged with skill and precision.

So many different methods have been employed in the construction of lectures that it is difficult to describe them. We indicate three, as in approved use and most worthy of your attention.

A. THE FIRST CLASS OF LECTURES.

The first class of lectures are those in which the division follows the natural order and progress of the words or thought.

The Spirit of God in many places has indited truth with so much that is natural in order and logical in sequence that oftentimes the very best possible arrangement is the notation of the successive steps in the natural evolution of the thought.

An example of this we have in I Peter 1:3-5. In this passage the apostle gives thanks to God for the "Hope of the Christian," which is described,

1. As to its nature; it is a *lively hope*.
2. As to the manner in which this hope is produced in us; *He hath begotten us again unto a lively hope*.
3. As to the means by which this is secured; *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*.
4. As to the object of this hope; it is *an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away*.
5. As to its certainty; *who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*.
6. As to its present enjoyment; *wherein we greatly rejoice*.

In this passage you will notice that the simple order of the clauses of the text furnishes the points of thought and yet preserves the unity of the theme.

Nor are such passages rare. It may be of advantage to mention a few such examples. Psalm I is capable of such a treatment, also I Peter 1:3, Isaiah 35:8-10,

Psalms 23, Ephesians 1:3, Philippians 2:14-16, Hebrews 13:20, 21, and many others. In all these passages the division follows very much the order of the words or clauses.

But there are also passages in which this same form of division may follow rather the order of the thought. As an example of this we take the account of the homeward journey of the Ethiopian Eunuch, as recorded in Acts 8:26-40. He is here presented to us:

1. As an inquirer.
2. As a convert.
3. As a confessor.
4. As an initiated member of the Church.
5. As a rejoicing Christian.

Taking up these divisions separately, the passage furnishes us with numerous particulars.

1. As an inquirer. He appears, *a.* as an anxious inquirer; *b.* as an instructed inquirer.

2. As a convert. Under this head the means by which his conversion was effected are given; *a.* by the truth of God; *b.* by the instrumentality of the ministry of Philip in the explanation and application of the truth; *c.* by the Divine Spirit in making the truth effectual.

3. As a confessor of Christ. Under this point you have his wonderful confession, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

4. As an initiated member of the Church. He is baptized.

5. As a rejoicing Christian. He went on his way rejoicing.

This is an example of the way in which many narrative passages may be divided.

B. THE SECOND CLASS OF LECTURES.

The Second Class of Lectures is that in which the passage is expounded or the scene with which it is connected is described in the introduction, and the lessons which it teaches, or the doctrines which it contains, or

the points of experimental or practical application which it suggests, drawn out one by one, are enforced and applied. These points are the divisions of the Lecture.

This is a large and valuable class of lectures and is probably in more general use than any other. To show its applicability to *historical subjects* we take an example from Bishop Ryle, so celebrated for his plain and pungent Gospel preaching. The text is

Mark 4: 37-40.

The disciples, obeying the command of Jesus, put out to sea, and encountered a great storm. Jesus was in the hinder part of the ship asleep. Becoming alarmed they awoke Him, and He arose and rebuked the wind, etc.

This whole scene Bishop Ryle describes with much vividness in the introduction, and then draws from the whole passage the following points of instruction:

1. That following Christ will not prevent our having earthly sorrows or troubles.
2. That the Lord Jesus was really and truly man (he slept).
3. That there may be much weakness and infirmity even to a true Christian.
4. We learn the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. We learn how tenderly and patiently He deals with weak believers.

This example shows how this method of division is applicable to historical subjects; but it is no less suitable to subjects of *didactic character*. I give an example from Dr. John Harris, who was one of the most brilliant and profound preachers among the Congregationalists of England. The text is,

Luke 7: 19-23.

It is the narrative of the mission of John's disciples to Jesus to ask if he was the Messiah, etc. In the introduction he describes the circumstances. Jesus did not answer directly, but his actions, which followed, were full of meaning. With a view to the deeper didactic

meaning of the passage, he deduces the following points of instruction :

1. That our Lord's teaching consisted to a remarkable degree in *deeds*. He did not answer, but his actions spoke.

2. His deeds were *wonders* (he healed the sick, etc).

3. His wonders were *mercies*—they were miracles of benevolence.

4. His mercies were in answer to human questions and necessities.

This scheme of thought is certainly remarkable. I give it not as a division which it would be well to imitate, but as a product of genius and as having an interest as an intellectual curiosity.

Let me also direct your attention to a kind of Lecture of this same class which is slightly different in its form. You will observe that, in the Lecture which I have just described, the principal purpose of the preacher is to treat the points of doctrine or practice which he draws from the text. For this reason he makes the introduction short, and takes up the points of his division as soon as he can evolve the meaning of the passage.

But it sometimes happens that the chief purpose of the preacher is to deal with the text, if it is a narrative to explain and set it forth in all its connections, or if a doctrine to show fully and accurately its statement in the text by a full exposition. In this case the half of the sermon or more is devoted to the text, and the remainder of the sermon to a brief statement of the points of instruction or application.

This is probably the best method, when the preacher is lecturing continuously on a book in the Bible. It adapts itself finely to historical passages and is also applicable to didactic exposition, as when you are lecturing on an Epistle. You will find excellent illustrations of this species of lecture in the works of Dr. Wm. M. Taylor of New York. He has a volume on Paul, another on Peter,

also on Moses and Elijah. All his historical lectures are of this character.

C. THE THIRD CLASS OF LECTURES.

The Third Class of Lectures is that in which a connected passage is subjected to a regular analysis and distributed by a formal division. It treats a complete passage or a whole paragraph as a sermon treats a single text. This species of lecture is one of the highest kinds of pulpit address and taxes the capacity of the preacher as much as any other species of homiletical preparation. Very few men can do it well. The reason is the want of analytical culture and that large acquaintance with the Word of God, which is necessary to such a comprehensive statement.

- I. A FEW GENERAL EXAMPLES will enable you to see clearly the idea and method of this division.

Galatians 1: 15, 16.

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”

In this passage Paul describes his own conversion from the standpoint of his inward experience and in a detail of particulars;

1. Showing the nature of his conversion. It was *a revelation of God’s Son in him.*

A revelation,

a. Of His Divinity.

b. Of His Beauty and Glory.

c. Of His Excellence and Suitableness.

2. He shows the agency by which his conversion was effected. This agency was

a. Divine. It was God who revealed his Son in him.

b. It was by a gracious call. He *called me by his grace.*

3. He shows the source or origin of his conversion. It originated in a divine predestination. *It pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb.*

4. He shows the purpose of his conversion. It was *that he might preach him among the heathen.*

5. He shows the results of his conversion. *Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.* Viz.: the result of his conversion was that he was freed from all selfish and worldly considerations. If he had consulted with flesh and blood he would not have preached the Gospel to the heathen.

As it is important to understand clearly this method of division I had better add another example of a similar didactic character.

Hebrews 2:14-15.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage."

From this passage we gather three points of thought.

1. The power of the Devil. He is here characterized as *the one who has the power of death.*

2. The conquest which the Son of God achieved over him. He is said to have *destroyed him*; not his person, but his power. This he did—

a. By his incarnation. *As the children were partakers of flesh and blood he himself likewise also took part of the same.*

b. He destroyed the power of the Devil by his death. *That through death he might destroy him who had the power of death.*

3. The blessed deliverance which he has accomplished for his people. *He has delivered them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.*

This method of division is not only applicable to a few carefully chosen passages but it may be used by a

skillful analyst in the treatment of a large portion of the Scriptural record. Let me show by examples its application to both the Parables and Miracles.

2. TO THE PARABLES. Let me take the Parable of the Rich Man;

Luke 12: 16-20.

"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully, etc." This parable,

1. Describes a Character;
2. Exhibits God's estimate of it;
3. Pronounces its doom.

Taking up each of these divisions observe the teaching of the Parable.

1. It describes a Character.
 - a. By his external circumstances. He was rich and prosperous. *The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.*
 - b. By his internal state of thought and feeling. He thought within himself saying: *What shall I do because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?*
 - c. By his present purpose. *And he said this will I do, I will pull down my barns and will build greater and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.*
 - d. By his future expectations. *And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.*

Having described the Character, the Parable exhibits,

2. God's estimate of it. *But God said unto him, thou fool. He was a fool in God's esteem:*
 - a. Because he sought his highest happiness in riches and the gratifications which they afford.
 - b. Because he made provisions for the flesh to the neglect of the interests of his soul.
 - c. Because he calculated upon a long life of enjoyment.

Having shown the divine estimate of this man's character, the Parable.

3. Pronounces his doom. *This night thy soul shall be required of thee.*

3. TO THE MIRACLES. Let me also give an example of the use of this method of division in analyzing the teachings of the Miracles. Let us take the cure of the Ten Lepers;

Luke 17: 11-19.

The narrative presents

1. The suppliants who apply for relief, and the condition of those whose spiritual state they symbolize, *sinners, spiritual lepers*.
2. The supplication which they make, *Jesus Master, have mercy on us*. Observe,
 - a. The person to whom they appeal; *Jesus, Master*.
 - b. The blessing which they ask; *Mercy*.
 - c. The opportunity which they seized; *when Jesus was passing by*.
 - d. The position which they took; *they stood afar off*.
 - e. The earnestness which they exhibited.
3. The answer which their application secured.
4. The results of this blessed answer;
 - a. In the adoring thankfulness of the one Samaritan.
 - b. In the odious ingratitude of the other nine.

III. TEXTUAL SERMONS.

Having finished Expositions and Lectures we now proceed to the third kind of Textual Divisions, namely Textual Sermons. As these are ordinarily the common staple of pulpit preparation it is necessary that we consider carefully the mode of their division. This is difficult, however, on account of the endless variety of divisions of which this method is capable. The genius, taste and knowledge of the preacher all come in, to influence and modify the method in which he evolves and distributes the thought under the verbal indices of a single text. You hear a text beautifully divided and wonder by what rule the preacher works and think that if you had the same rule you might produce a similar result. But this is all a mistake. It is not a matter of rule but of talent. The probability is that the preacher never thought of a

rule. The division is just the method in which his mind moves and his peculiar tastes, talents, acquirements and experiences all combine to form the mold in which the sermon was cast. In this sense a sermon can no more be made by rules than poetry can be written by rule. Rules do not create but only limit and regulate. In this respect they are highly important. As in poetry a knowledge of the art and of the different kinds of metres, and the uses to which each is adapted, both facilitates and improves the work, so here a knowledge of the best methods, a skill in their employment and a perception of their applicability to different subjects, is of the highest importance. The productions of the best talent without this will be crude and ill-shapen.

Let us endeavor to understand the Textual Sermon and the method of its division as distinguished from sermons of other classes.

A topical sermon deals with a *topic*, and its division is the division of the *topic*.

A Textual Sermon deals with a *text*, and its division is the division of the *text*.

A topic is an abstract truth which the thought of the preacher evolves from the text, and treats in logical form and by a systematic analysis. The sermon is the preacher's reasoning about what the text suggests and warrants.

A Textual Sermon is God's message as contained in an individual text, given in the form in which the Divine Spirit indited it; the divisions of the sermon are just the points of thought expressed in the text; and the preacher's work is simply to explain what God says in that text and enforce it.

The Textual Sermon then has the advantage of presenting the preacher as God's messenger, the text as the message, the divisions of the text as the points of the message, and the sermon as the explanation, illustration and enforcement upon the hearers of the word of truth which God has sent for their salvation.

To render you assistance, I have labored to systematize and arrange the different kinds of textual divisions in a distinct classification. My aim has not been to show what kinds of divisions should be made, nor to classify divisions on any theoretical principle, but simply to find out what different kinds of textual divisions are in actual use among skillful sermonizers and to classify them as accurately as possible and to explain and illustrate the law of their construction.

It is perhaps not possible to include all the different forms of textual division in any classification, but we may comprehend the most important and approved forms in eight distinct classes—

- A. Natural Divisions.
- B. Topico-Textual.
- C. Regular.
- D. Observational.
- E. Interrogative.
- F. Distributive.
- G. Incidental.
- H. Divisions designed for continuous application.

A. NATURAL DIVISIONS.

The first form of Textual Divisions we denominate Natural Divisions. Of these there are two kinds, those which follow the natural order of the words, and those which follow the natural order of the thought.

We have alluded to both these methods in the treatment of a lecture of the first class, but as they become more important and assume much more the form of a system in the treatment of a single text it is necessary that we should understand these methods accurately.

I. DIVISIONS WHICH FOLLOW THE NATURAL ORDER OF THE WORDS.

This is sometimes the very best division. As the words express the meaning of the text, these are sometimes the very best hooks upon which to hang the points of your thoughts. Some of the most powerful sermons

have been preached upon divisions of this kind. "Many preachers," says Dr. Kidder, "reject this style of division on account of its simplicity and yet it is often beautiful in its application and more than any other adapted to aid in the elucidation of the truth of God. It is specially applicable to texts containing precepts, commands, promises, warnings, and facts." It must, however, be noticed that this method of division is applicable to but a small number of texts. A failure to perceive this has done more than anything else to bring this kind of division into disrepute. Some preachers, hearing others preach beautiful and effective sermons after this method, and not having discrimination enough to perceive to what texts it is applicable, have made themselves ridiculous by forcing this treatment upon texts to which it is not adapted. Let me then illustrate both its proper and improper use.

Mr. Spurgeon in one of his sermons treats Matthew 20:28 in this method.

Subject—The Mission of Christ.

The division follows the order of the words.

1. *The Son of Man.* Humanity and Brotherhood.
2. *The Son of Man came.* His antecedent existence.
3. *The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister.* His vicarious life.
4. *The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom.* His vicarious death.
5. *The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many.* The amplitude of the Atonement.

Another example will show its application to the invitations and promises.

That precious invitation, Matthew 11:28, may be treated in this way:

"Come unto me all ye that labor," etc. In this passage we have,

1. An Invitation.
2. A Promise.

1. Under the first head the Invitation, notice
 - a. The invitation *Come*.
 - b. The person who invites, *Come unto me*.
 - c. The persons invited, *all who labor and are heavy laden*.
2. Under the second head, the Promise, notice
 - a. The Promiser; "I." This omnipotent "I" assures its fulfilment.
 - b. The freeness of the Promise; *I will give*.
 - c. The boon which is offered; *Rest*.

From these examples you will see that some passages divide themselves, and the order of the words is the most accurate and logical arrangement of the thought.

Let me now show the improper use of this method. This was finely ridiculed by the celebrated lecturer, John B. Gough. In showing how some of the English clergymen preach he substituted with an excellent judgment instead of a passage of scripture a nursery rhyme, and said they proceeded in this way:

1. *How*.
2. *How doth*.
3. *How doth the little busy bee*.
4. *How doth the little busy bee improve*.
5. *How doth the little busy bee improve each shining hour*.

His ridicule is in excellent point and applicable to much that passes under the name of preaching. Ridicule must not, however, prejudice us against a valuable method, but only lead us to ascertain distinctly its proper and improper use. We must remember, too, that every word of God has a meaning and that the connection of the words is but the index of the inspired thought.

I do not think it right to give you an example in which a scriptural text has been made ridiculous by an ill-judged use of this method of division, but I may show you that this kind of division is also objectionable when it is stiff or artificial. One of the most brilliant and able

of the Scotch preachers, Dr. Arnot, was betrayed into the mistake of such a division, in a sermon on

Psalm 48:3

“God is known in her palaces for a refuge.”

His division is,—

1. *God.*
2. *God is.*
3. *God is known.*
4. *God is known in her palaces.*
5. *God is known in her palaces for a refuge.*

This a five-fold division of words, when the text contains but one idea, “God as a Refuge.”

But we must insist that such mistakes and abuses of texts ought not to be used to the prejudice of a good method which is indicated by the way in which inspiration has formed some scriptural sentences.

We might hold up to ridicule in this same way every kind of division by quoting some ridiculous abuse of it. For example how absurd the propositional method appears in the following example.

The text is the “Ten Commandments.” From this text an old Calvinistic divine draws the proposition: “All of the ten commandments are violated by a belief in Arminianism.”

1. Arminians make a divinity of man’s power and thus break the first Commandment.

2. They bow down to this idol of their own creation and thus break the second.

3. They talk of ineffectual grace and thus take God’s name in vain, and so break the third Commandment. And in this manner he went through the Decalogue, concluding tenthly, that they covet their elect neighbor’s interest in Christ, and so break the tenth commandment.

As it would be unfair to use this absurd treatment of a proposition, as an objection to this kind of preaching, so it is equally unjust to allow ridiculous mistakes and abuses to create prejudice against this method of division which has been used with great power and success.

2. DIVISIONS WHICH FOLLOW THE ORDER OF THE THOUGHT.

The second form of the Natural Textual Division is that which follows the natural order of the thought. In some passages the thought naturally divides itself, as in the passage,

John 5:11.

"This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Here is a twofold record.

1. That God hath given to us eternal life; and,
2. That this life is in His Son.

The thought of the text divides itself, and no better division can be made.

There is great beauty and simplicity in this kind of division when skilfully handled. The sermons of Robertson of Brighton are largely if not exclusively of this character. This division is difficult just because it is so simple. We are prone to turn away from so simple a plan to seek after something great. Some minds have the peculiar infelicity of always finding the involved and abstruse and never the simple. When poetry is written so naturally that the reader feels, "that is just the way I would have said it myself," it is good poetry. Just so when a sermon is executed so that an intelligent hearer feels that it is just the way I would have said it, it is a good sermon. Such sermons may not gain for you the reputation of greatness, but they really are the greatest sermons. It is characteristic of great minds to make difficult subjects simple. It is easy to obscure a subject, but it is greatness to penetrate it and let the light through it. Some one has said that "the frame work of a sermon is like a window; it is made to let the light in, and the less sash the more light."

As an illustration of this species of division we take the text,

Revelation 3:12.

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I

will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem'' (whole verse).

Theme.—The Conquerer and his Reward.

Following the natural order of thought the text divides itself thus:

1. The person to whom the promise is made; *To him that overcometh.*

a. Who overcometh himself.

b. Who overcometh the world.

c. Who overcometh Satan.

2. The reward promised.

a. It is the reward of honor. *I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.*

b. It is a reward of sonship. *I will write upon him the name of my God.*

c. It is a reward of privilege. *I will write upon him the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God.*

d. It is a reward of participation with Christ. *I will write upon him my new name.*

e. It is a reward that is perpetual and unfailing. *He shall go no more out.*

To this I may add an example from the sermons of Bishop Ryle on the text,

Ephesians 3:8.

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

Notice 1. What Paul says of himself; *who am less than the least of all saints.*

2. What he says of his ministerial office; *is this grace given to preach.*

3. What he says of the great subject of his preaching; *the unsearchable riches of Christ.*

B. TOPICO-TEXTUAL DIVISIONS.

The second general class of Textual Divisions we denominate Topico-Textual.

This is a distinct and beautiful class of divisions, which is not described in the books or designated by a name. It is, however, in approved use among good sermonizers, and in looking over volumes of sermons you will every now and then find sermons of this class, which the preacher has framed not by any rule which he has been taught, but by the suggestion of his own talent.

These divisions are topical because they present topical points of thought. But they are also textual because these topical points are suggested and indicated by the text. This division then is a union of the Topical and Textual method, and gives us the most perfect ideal of a sermon, viz.: topical points of thought under a textual arrangement.

That you may see this clearly let me describe more fully what is meant. When the text presents a single subject and contains several points of instruction or items of thought connected with that subject, but not in any natural or logical order, then the arrangement of these points, so as to inhere in the theme or subject as their common center, is a Topico-Textual Division. Or, to express this in another form, it sometimes happens that you find a text which contains four or five distinct points of thought. You then inquire, is there any common theme around which they will all revolve as a centre, and if this common theme is found, they ~~are~~ arrange these points of thought in unity and order around this theme is a Topico-Textual division. We call it topical because you have a theme or topic and points of thought which properly and logically belong to the topic, and yet it is textual because the points spring from the text and have a textual arrangement.

But an example will explain the method better than any description. As a simple and obvious example take the text,

Galatians 4:4,5.

“But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the

law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

There are a number of points in this text about "The Mission of the Messiah." Grouping them around this theme, we have unity of subject and topical points of thought, under a textual arrangement. Thus,

1. The person who was sent upon this mission to earth; *God sent his Son.*

2. The time of this mission; *when the fullness of the time was come.*

3. The nature and condition in which He appeared; *made of a woman.*

4. The legal status which He assumed; *made under the law.*

5. The great purpose of His mission; *to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

As another example of the topico-textual method take the text,

Acts 17:31.

"He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

re—"The Judgment."

1. Its certainty. This is assured—

a. By the appointment of the day. "He hath appointed *a day* in the which he will judge the world."

b. Its certainty is assured, by the resurrection of Christ. "Whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that *he hath raised him from the dead.*"

2. The Judge by whom the judgment will be administered. "By *that man* whom he hath ordained."

3. The persons who will be brought to trial. "He will judge *the world.*"

4. The principle upon which the judgment will proceed. "He will judge the world *in righteousness.*"

In this example you will notice that if you were

preaching a topical sermon on "The Judgment," you could not find better points of topical thought, and yet there are all indicated in the several clauses of the text. The divisions are all topical, and yet they are all textual.

As this class of divisions is so important, I add another example of a little different character from a sermon of the distinguished Baptist Professor, Dr. H. G. Weston.

Ephesians 5:25, 27.

"Christ also loved his Church and gave himself for it that he might sanctify and cleanse it," etc.

Theme—"Christ's love for His Church."

1. In time Past. *He gave himself for it.*
2. In the Present. *That he might sanctify and cleanse it.*
3. In the Future. *That he might present it to himself a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.*

Here again you have a fine union of topical thought with textual arrangement.

In this example you will observe that this method of division is not confined to single texts, but may be applied to more lengthy passages. In this way we may have a Topico-Textual lecture as well as a Topico-Textual sermon.

C. REGULAR DIVISIONS.

The third general class of Textual Divisions is called Regular Divisions.

It is sometimes called a *Scholastic* Division, as it comes down to us from mediæval times. This method restricts the number of divisions to three, and in this way each sermon was to be a witness for the Trinity in the number of its divisions. Dr. Phelps remarks that "the mediæval mind saw trinity in everything from the Mosaic record of creation down to a three-leafed clover, and one of the developments of this fancy was the Trinitarian division of a sermon." But although this method of division originated in a scholastic fancy, it has been retained in the church and is still in common use by many who have

never thought of its origin or meaning. This method, as applied to a certain class of texts, is the very best method, and the simple fact that it has continued to the present time shows its value.

What a regular division is, it is difficult to explain in words. A triangle is regular when it has three equal sides. An epic poem is regular when it has a beginning middle and end. So the description of an event is regular when you are made to see the actor, the action and its effects.

In like manner a sermon is regular when it has three parts, sustaining such a relation to each other that the second proceeds from the first and the third from the second or from a union of the first and second; as where the first presents an actor, the second an action, and the third the result; or, when the first presents a cause, the second the operation of the cause, and the third the result which the cause produces. An example will illustrate what we mean by a regular division.

Philippians 2:13.

“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

In this passage we have a cause, “God;” the operation of the cause, “He worketh in you,” and the result, “His good pleasure.”

Hence we may arrange the division thus:

Theme.—“Efficacious Grace.”

1. Its author, *God*.

2. Its operation, *which worketh in you both to will and to do*.

3. Its result. *His good pleasure*.

As another example take

Isaiah 53:11.

“He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.”

1. The sufferings of Christ, here called *the travail of his soul*.

2. The fruit resulting from His suffering, *he shall see of the travail of his soul.*

3. The satisfaction which He will enjoy. *He shall be satisfied.*

In the same manner we may divide

Titus 3: 5.

“According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

Theme—“Salvation.”

1. Its nature; *He saved us.*

2. Its source; *According to his mercy he saved us.*

3. The instrumentality by which it is effected; *By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

In this same way we can treat what I may call every active transitive passage, in which the actor, agent, or principle is represented as operating and passing forward to results. So also where you can describe causes and effects with the connection between them. Also where you speak of a blessing, showing what it is, whence it springs and the enjoyment it affords.

D. OBSERVATIONAL DIVISIONS.

The fourth General Class of Textual Divisions are Observational. This division consists of a series of observations or reflections which spring naturally from the text. Many very useful sermons are of this character.

Dr. Addison Alexander gives us a division of this kind from

Mark 14:41.

“Sleep on now, and take you rest: it is enough, the hour is come, behold the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.”

He introduces the text by a very vivid recital and explanation of the narrative and then draws from the text the following observations:

1. The Son of Man may even now be betrayed into the hands of sinners,

2. When the cause of Christ is about to be betrayed into the hands of sinners, His disciples are to watch unto prayer, lest they enter into temptation.

3. When the disciples of Christ are thus left to watch, whilst He is interceding with the Father, they too often fall asleep.

4. When asleep, the merciful Saviour calls them to arouse: "Can ye not watch one hour?"

5. If they sleep on till the moment of privilege and opportunity has passed, then they hear His sad voice, "Sleep on now, take your rest."

There is something more awful in this mild but significant permission to "sleep on" than in all the invectives or reproofs He could have uttered.

In this example you will notice that each observation springs from the text, that they are all connected, and each one is an advance upon the former.

Another example of a briefer form of observation we find in a sermon of Dr. Wm. M. Taylor on the text,

Colossians 4:18.

"Remember my bonds."

Observe,

1. Paul's bonds were no disgrace to him.

2. Paul's bonds did not prevent him from being useful.

3. Paul's bonds did not mar his happiness.

4. Paul's bonds did not lessen his reward.

In using this kind of division several things are to be observed—

First, be sure that you make either observations or reflections, and not propositions. They may easily be confounded.

Second, let your observations be either devotional, or experimental, or practical, and not philosophical, or historical, or critical.

Third, observations should not be commonplace, dry or spiritless. Let them be the fruit of careful thought under the guidance of a sober judgment and a gracious heart.

E. INTERROGATIVE DIVISIONS.

The fifth Class of Textual Divisions is the Interrogative.

This is a favorite division with many preachers. It consists in bringing out the truths embodied in the text by well adjusted questions. Each division is an interrogation which finds its answer in the text. Or the text may be a question which finds its answer in the division. This method has many advantages. The human mind naturally operates in its investigating process in an interrogative way. "A question," says Dr. Phelps, "is a prospective statement of thought; it gives promise of an unknown answer; it is the forerunner of an invisible request. To every alert mind it is welcome. Interrogative statements of emphatic truths are a striking feature of our Saviour's preaching. Socrates, by his example, gave it a name. Such interrogations draw a hearer to your discussion by the sheer attraction of curiosity to see what is to come next."

Another advantage of this method is, that it gives vividness to the truth you present by holding it out upon the point of an inquiry.

It is also a great advantage to the preacher. It is a spur to thought in his preparation, for the question makes him feel that he is committed to give the answer and that he must work to evolve it.

This method is of course not applicable to every text, nor would it be best to use it habitually if it were, but it may frequently be adopted with good results. This method was in use among the ancient orators. Cicero used this method in his oration in defense of Cælius, who was accused of poisoning his friend. Cicero expresses his doubt of the accusation and then puts these questions:

1. How was the design laid?
2. How did he get the poison? Under this second head he asks as subdivisions the questions, Whence came it? By whose assistance, and to whom, and where was it delivered?

We may treat in this manner,

John 17:9, 10.

“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.”

Two simple questions find their answer in the text and evolve its meaning:

1. For whom does Christ pray? Answer—

a. Negatively; *I pray not for the world.*

b. Affirmatively; *I pray for them which thou hast given me.*

2. Why does He pray for these in particular?

a. Because *they are thine.*

b. Because *all thine are mine.*

c. Because *I am glorified in them.*

As an example of a more elaborate division of this kind, take the following:

Luke 15:22.

“Bring hither the best robe and put it on him.”

1. What is *the best robe*? It is the robe of Christ's righteousness.

2. What is its superior excellence? It is called *the best robe*. It is best as compared with others.

a. It is better than Adam's robe of innocence.

b. It is better than the righteousness of the saints.

c. It is better than the garments of the angels.

3. How is this robe to be brought forth? *Bring hither the best robe.* In its spiritual application it is the command of God to the ministers of the Gospel. It directs them.

a. To exhibit this robe, to display it before the eyes of the people, that all men may see its beauty and applicability.

b. To offer it as God's free gift.

4. How is this robe to be put on?

a. On man's side it is put on by faith.

- b. On God's part it is put on by imputation. It is
unto all and upon all that believe.

As an example of the other kind of interrogative Division in which the text is a question and the division the answer, take the following from Dr. Wm. M. Taylor of New York on the text,

John 18:17.

"Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?"

1. There are those who say "yes," when they ought to say "no." This is hypocrisy.

2. There are those who say "no," and say it truly. This avowed ungodliness.

3. There are those who say "no," when they should say "yes."

4. There are those who, being true disciples, say "yes," everywhere and at all times.

Another form of this kind of Interrogative Division in frequent use is made by shifting the emphasis from one expressive word to another in the text.

A good example we have in

Matthew 20:6.

"Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

Theme—"Spiritual Idleness."

1. Why stand ye here *idle*?

2. Why stand ye *here*? in the market place, where all should be busy.

3. Why stand *ye*?

4. Why stand ye here *all the day*?

5. *Why*—give us a reason.

F. DISTRIBUTIVE DIVISIONS.

The sixth class of Textual Sermons we denominate Distributive Divisions. This is an important class of divisions and is in continual use in some of its forms in the pulpit. A Distributive Division is not properly a division either of a Text or a Topic, but consists in showing how a text may be applicable to different subjects,

to different persons, and to different states and conditions.

In this way all Typical subjects are to be treated. You show, first, their literal; and, second, their spiritual applications. Some Typical subjects have first, a literal meaning; second, a reference to Christ; third, to the Church; fourth, to individual believers. When you make each of these references a division you have a Distributive Division.

In the same way we may treat Prophetical subjects. Some have a primary and secondary, and some a continuous fulfilment. Many of the most precious passages of the Psalms describe, first, David's own experience; second, refer to Christ; and, third, to the believer. Some Prophecies are fulfilled, first, in the Jewish Church; second, in the Gospel Church, and, third, point onward to their complete fulfilment at the Second Advent. In all such passages the mode of distribution is so plain that we need not stay to exemplify.

There is, however, a large class of Distributive Divisions of another kind. We may show how a text may be applicable to persons under a great variety of circumstances. Thus Dr. Archibald Alexander takes the text,

II Corinthians 12: 9

"My grace is sufficient for thee"

He shows that it is applicable to persons,

1. Under conviction.
2. In temptation.
3. In afflictions.
4. In the performance of arduous duties.

Here the text is distributed to persons under four varieties of circumstances.

As another example we may take

Philippians 3: 10.

"The Power of His Resurrection."

This passage suggests the different ways in which the Resurrection of Christ exerts an influential power in the life and experience of a Christian.

1. The Resurrection of Christ has a *demonstrative* power.

a. It demonstrates that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah.

b. It demonstrates His divine Sonship.

2. It has a *justifying* power, or in other words, it brings us an assurance of our justification and acceptance with God.

3. It has a *regenerative* and *quicken*ing power. "We are begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

4. It has a *conquering* power. Christ's resurrection is our conquest over death.

5. It has a *reproductive* power. Christ is the first-fruits, and the resurrection will be the future harvest of redeemed souls.

Another example from Lavington shows how we may treat in this manner many of the Scriptural declarations concerning Christ. He takes the text,

Hebrews 13: 8.

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day and forever." He shows its truth,

1. As regards His person.

2. As to His offices.

3. As to His purposes.

4. As to His promises.

G. INCIDENTAL DIVISIONS.

The seventh Class of Textual Divisions we denominate Incidental. This a large irregular class of sermons, in frequent use, which are good in themselves, but which cannot be arranged under any of the preceding heads, and should therefore be described and classified, lest the student may be at a loss where to place them or be in doubt as to whether they are legitimate or not.

There are sermons on texts which cannot be divided naturally or rhetorically or regularly, and must therefore

take their shape and arrangement accidentally from the character of the passage or its incidental connections. Let me illustrate:

Some towns and cities are laid out with regular geometrical precision in streets, squares, and blocks. Others take their shape naturally from the position of the ground, whilst still others have taken their shape from circumstances—they were built just as it happened and the streets afterward adapted to the necessities of the case. Just so in this latter manner some sermons must follow the law of necessity and receive the impress of the circumstances which surround the passage. Under these circumstances the distribution follows no law but the law of accidental adjustment, and is therefore good because necessary.

Of this character are sermons which present several points of thought found in a text which have various degrees of relation to each other, but a precise unity cannot be claimed. For illustration take as your text.

Hebrews 4:1.

“Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”

Here is

1. A promise stated.
2. A danger suggested.
3. A duty inculcated.

This is a perfectly good division, and yet it is neither natural nor rhetorical nor regular, but purely Incidental from the character of the passage. It does not claim a perfect unity, yet there is a bond which binds it sufficiently close to make it a legitimate division.

As an example of a very simple kind, in which the incidental features of the passage indicate the division, let us take as the text

John 4:29.

“Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?”

We have here,

1. A supernatural fact; *He told me all things that ever I did.*

2. A rational inference; *Is not this the Christ?*

3. A benevolent invitation; *Come, see a man.*

For another example we take

Psalms 7:19-18.

"Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

1. There are wondrous things in God's law.

2. We need spiritual illumination to see them.

3. This illumination is the gift of God; *Open thou mine eyes.*

These are examples of very simple divisions from short texts.

As an example of a more elaborate division and as showing how this kind of division may be applied to longer passages let us take as our text

2 Timothy 4:6-8.

"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, etc."

Here the division may take shape from the incidental character of the passage.

In this passage we have a look,

1. At the Past.

2. At the Present.

3. At the Future.

Let us take up each of these points and follow the guidance of the text.

We have

1. A look at the Past. He looks back and sees life.

a. As a *race* which he has finished; "I have finished my course."

b. As a *battle* which he has fought; "I have fought a good fight."

c. As a *trust* which he has kept; "I have kept the faith."

2. A look at the Present. From this retrospect he turns to look upon the present, and he sees that his end has come and he contemplates death;

a. As an *offering*; "I am now ready to be offered."
The figure is that of a drink offering. I am now ready to be *poured out*.

b. As a *departure*; "The time of my *departure* is at hand." The figure is nautical; He is to unfurl his sails and depart.

c. For death in both of these aspects, as an offering, and a departure he is ready; "I am now *ready*."

3. A look at the Future. In this prospect he sees his reward.

a. It is a *Crown*; "Henceforth is laid up for me a Crown."

b. It is a "crown of *Righteousness*."

c. It is laid up for him; "Henceforth *is laid up for me*."

d. It is a crown laid up for his *coronation day*; "Henceforth is laid up for me a Crown which the Lord will give me at *that day*."

H. DIVISIONS FOR CONTINUOUS APPLICATION.

In the eighth Class of Textual Sermons we group those which are designed for Continuous Application.

These divisions consist of practical or experimental points of thought, drawn from the text which are to be immediately applied and enforced. When this Division is adopted the whole discourse resembles the peroration or conclusion of an ordinary sermon. The points which constitute the division are not to be argued or explained but simply enforced in the most pathetic and pungent manner.

The object of the preacher is present impression, and he deals with the heart and conscience, rather than with the intellect and judgment. His object is to rouse, quicken, or melt his audience. He therefore selects such points as have the most direct bearing and urges them

with all the warmth and vehemence which he can command.

This is a highly important class of sermons, and blessed is that minister who has the qualifications and skill to execute them successfully. To preach always in this way is not expedient, but to preach frequently, very frequently in this manner is absolutely necessary.

Such is the tendency of even the best Christians to sloth and lukewarmness, that they must often be roused from their slumber, and the truth presented in its most stirring and pathetic applications.

While this method is important, it is no less difficult. It requires a heart all glowing with love of Jesus, and penetrated with the conviction of the worth of souls.

Such sermons can only be prepared properly when the preacher's heart is deeply imbued with the savor of Godliness, and his soul thrilled with a realization of the solemn account he must render at the judgment for the ministry which has been committed to him, and for the souls whose salvation, under God, has been entrusted to his fidelity.

Added to this preparation of heart, this kind of sermonizing requires skill in rightly dividing the truth to the different classes to whom he speaks, and a gracious sagacity in perceiving the precise phase of truth which is specially adapted to the impression which he wishes to make. Here the power of the true preacher is manifested more than in anything else. "A wise collegian," says another, "may explicate, a philosopher may make wise observations, a pleader may bring forth strong reasons, but the man who can maintain a uniform address to the people's heart for forty or fifty minutes, is a preacher."

This kind of sermonizing is difficult to illustrate in a lecture, because to give the full idea it would be necessary to read a whole sermon to the class, and show how it is constructed to this specific end. We may approximate the idea, however, by giving the divisions of a few sermons of this character, to show the kind of points which

should be made, and you can, from the character of these points, perceive the directness and pungency with which they should be filled out.

The following example from Simeon may serve our purpose.

Numbers 10:29.

“We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you; come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.”

1. The invitation; “Come thou with us.”

a. Let your faces be set in good earnest toward the promised land. It flows with milk and honey, viz: with all gospel blessings. Estimate these things properly. Lose no time in preparation. Engage at once in their pursuit lest you fail in obtaining them.

b. Let nothing be suffered to retard your progress heavenward. What consideration can outweigh the value of Heaven?

c. Proceed steadily till you are in possession of it. No tardiness, no weariness, no impatience, or change of purpose.

2. The arguments by which the invitation is enforced. Consider.

a. What benefits will accrue to yourself? “God hath spoken good concerning Israel;” good in progress, good in the richness of Divine Grace.

b. What benefits you will confer upon others. You will become a blessing by your prayers, an example by your works of faith and labors of love.

3. Address Individuals.

a. Those who have never yet thought of the invitation given them.

b. Those who have half accepted and are half inclined to turn back.

c. Those who have given themselves up to Christ are cleaving to Him with full purpose of heart.

You can readily imagine the effects of a sermon like this with the points well filled out, and delivered with a heart softened by the love of Jesus and a soul yearning for the salvation of sinners. The most perfect exemplar of this kind of preaching was Dr. Payson. His deep religious experience gave this cast to all the sermons which he prepared. His sermons have been re-published in three volumes, by Martine, of Philadelphia, and should have a place in the library of every minister. The man who will catch the spirit of preaching from Payson, and go forth with the same burning desire to save souls, cannot fail, with God's blessing, to do good.

An example from Payson may illustrate this method more fully.

Isaiah 38: 14.

“O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.”

After a stirring introduction he says, “Would to God I could persuade you all to adopt this language, and utter it from your hearts. Then would your salvation be secure. I must make the attempt, though I confess, with feeble hope of success. With this view I shall endeavor to show:

1. “That you all need some one to undertake for you, or, in other words, you need some one to make your cause his own and assist you in performing that work, on the performance of which your eternal happiness depends. You need some one—

- a. To support and comfort you under the trials of life. (This he enforces with a deep experience.)
- b. You need some one who can undertake to be your guide through life.
- c. Still more you need some one who will undertake to afford you effectual assistance in subduing your spiritual enemies.
- d. Most of all do you need some one who can and will undertake to plead your cause in Heaven.”

Having thus shown the need, he shows—

2. "That there is no one on earth or in Heaven, who is both able and willing to undertake for you, except the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. "The Lord Jesus Christ will and does undertake for every one who applies to him in the exercise of faith."

These points, you will notice, are all of the most direct and experimental character, and as filled out by the rich Biblical knowledge and deep experience of Payson they make the happiest impression.

In pursuing this kind of preaching you must observe several things.

First, that it does not admit of discussion or explication, or even formal or long statements, but consists in seizing acknowledged truths of the most experimental and practical character, and bringing them at once in contact with the heart and conscience.

Second, that your text or subject must be selected for this special purpose. Some texts are not capable of this kind of treatment, and nothing is more out of place than to force a pathetic treatment upon a didactic subject.

Third, that "This kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer." The proper preparation of heart is absolutely indispensable. This kind of preaching attempted in a cold frame is sure to fail.

